

The magistri Antelami in Genoa

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

A second early network ran from the Val d'Intelvi to Genoa. In Genoese documents from the twelfth century onwards the term *magistri Antelami* denotes building masters. The word derives from the ancient name of the Intelvi valley (*vallis Antelami*).¹ The Antelami became so identified with building in Genoa that the word came to mean simply "master builder" there. They appear in Genoese notarial records from 1157 and were organized as a corporation from the twelfth century onwards. Few of their buildings can be identified today: the only major complex attributed to them, the monastery of San Tommaso, was demolished in the second half of the nineteenth century, and capitals from its cloister in the Museo di Sant'Agostino recall the Romanesque churches of the Como region.² Their presence explains why later families from the same region, such as the Carlone of Rovio and Scaria, found an established network when they arrived in Genoa in the sixteenth century.

1 The Solari: from the Duomo to the Kremlin

The family whose history best links the medieval and early modern phases is that of the Solari from Carona, a village on the ridge above the Lake of Lugano. Giovanni Solari and his son Guiniforte Solari (1429–1481) directed the works of the Milan cathedral, the Certosa of Pavia and the Ospedale Maggiore of Milan, making the family for two generations the leading architects of the Sforza state.³ Cristoforo Solari, known as *il Gobbo*, carved the funerary effigies of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este, now in the Certosa of Pavia.

The most far-reaching career was that of Pietro Antonio Solari (c. 1450–1493), son of Guiniforte. At the end of the 1480s he followed the envoys of Grand Prince Ivan III to Moscow, where he worked with Marco Ruffo on the Palace of Facets in the Kremlin and built several of the towers of the Kremlin wall between 1490 and 1492, among them the Borovitskaya,

Spasskaya and Nikolskaya towers.⁴ A Latin inscription on the Kremlin wall, dated 1491, names him as *Petrus Antonius Solarius* from Milan. He died in Moscow in 1493. His journey anticipated by two centuries the far larger Ticinese presence in St Petersburg discussed later in this chapter. It also shows that Russian rulers recruited Italian-speaking builders from the lake region long before Peter the Great.

2 Genoa, Venice and Sicily in the fifteenth century

Two further families complete the picture of the fifteenth century. The Gaggini of Bissone produced Domenico Gaggini, who worked in Genoa on the chapel of Saint John the Baptist in the cathedral around 1450 and then moved to Palermo, where his son Antonello Gagini (1478–1536) became the dominant sculptor of Renaissance Sicily.⁵ The Lombardo family, whose founder Pietro Lombardo (c. 1435–1515) came from Carona, shaped Venetian Renaissance architecture and sculpture with the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli (1481–1489) and numerous tombs of doges, while Pietro also made the tomb of Dante in Ravenna.⁶ At Como the Rodari of Maroggia carved the portals and much of the sculptural decoration of the cathedral from the 1480s.

Family or master	Place of origin	Main destinations	Period
Campionesi	Campione	Modena, Milan	12th–14th c.
Bergamo	Verona		
<i>Magistri Antelami</i>	Val d'Intelvi	Genoa from 12th c.	Solari Carona Milan, Pavia, Moscow 15th c.
Gaggini Bissone	Genoa, Palermo	15th–16th c.	Lombardo Carona Venice, Ravenna 15th–16th c.
Rodari	Maroggia	Como	15th–16th c.

Table 1: Selected building families of the lake region before 1550. Sources: see notes to this section.

These careers establish three features that recur throughout the early modern period. The lake masters worked in family firms that transmitted skill and clients across generations. They followed the demand of princes and ecclesiastical building offices wherever it arose, from Palermo to Moscow. They also retained their connection with their villages, where their families kept land and houses and where they founded altars and chapels. It was this combination of mobile skill and a fixed home base that allowed the economy of remittances described in the later sections of this chapter.

3 Notes

1. Laura Damiani Cabrini, "Maestranze artistiche", Dizionario storico della Svizzera (DSS), version of 20 March 2015, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/047823/>. ↩
2. Wikipedia, "Magistri Antelami", https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magistri_Antelami (used as a last resort). ↩
3. Jessica Gritti, "Solari, Guiniforte", Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, vol. 93 (Rome 2018), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guiniforte-solari_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guiniforte-solari_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). ↩
4. Jessica Gritti, "Solari, Pietro Antonio", Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, vol. 93 (Rome 2018), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-antonio-solari_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-antonio-solari_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). ↩
5. Laura Damiani Cabrini, "Gaggini, Domenico", DSS, version of 4 September 2007, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/027631/>. ↩
6. Matteo Ceriana, "Lombardo, Pietro", Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, vol. 65 (Rome 2005), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-lombardo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-lombardo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). ↩

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